

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

COLLEEN CHAPPLE,

Plaintiff,

v.

LOWE'S HOME CENTERS, INC.,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION NO. 3:13-CV-2894

(JUDGE CAPUTO)

MEMORANDUM

Presently before the Court is a Complaint filed by Plaintiff Colleen Chapple (Doc.

- 1). Because the Complaint fails to establish that the Court has subject matter jurisdiction over the action, it will be dismissed unless Plaintiff can show that diversity jurisdiction is proper.

I. Background

Plaintiff filed this action on November 27, 2013. Plaintiff asserts that this Court's basis for jurisdiction is diversity of citizenship pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332. (Doc. 1, ¶ 5.) The Complaint alleges that Plaintiff Colleen Chapple "is an adult individual who currently resides at 22 Grace Drive, Plains, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania 18705." (Doc. 1, ¶1.) Plaintiff also alleges that Defendant Lowe's Home Centers, Inc. "is a North Carolina corporation with its principal office located at 1000 Lowe's Boulevard, Mooresville, North Carolina 28117." (Doc. 1, ¶2.)

II. Analysis

Section 1332(a)(1) gives district courts original jurisdiction to hear cases where the matter in controversy exceeds the value of seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) and is between citizens of different states. In order for jurisdiction to exist, there must be complete

diversity, meaning that each defendant must be a citizen of a different state from each plaintiff. *Owen Equip. & Erection Co. v. Kroger*, 437 U.S. 365, 373 (1978).

“It is . . . well established that when jurisdiction depends upon diverse citizenship the absence of sufficient averments or of facts in the record showing such required diversity of citizenship is fatal and cannot be overlooked by the court, even if the parties fail to call attention to the defect, or consent that it may be waived.” *Thomas v. Bd. of Trs.*, 195 U.S. 207, 211 (1904). Federal courts have an obligation to address issues of subject matter jurisdiction *sua sponte*. *Meritcare Inc. v. St. Paul Mercury Ins. Co.*, 166 F.3d 214, 217 (3d Cir. 1999). Moreover, “[w]hen the foundation of federal authority is, in a particular instance, open to question, it is incumbent upon the courts to resolve such doubts, one way or the other, before proceeding to a disposition of the merits.” *Carlsberg Res. Corp. v. Cambria Sav. & Loan Ass’n*, 554 F.2d 1254, 1256 (3d Cir. 1977); see also Fed R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3).

For purposes of diversity jurisdiction, a natural person is deemed to be a citizen of the state where they are domiciled. *Swiger v. Allegheny Energy, Inc.*, 540 F.3d 179, 182 (3d Cir. 2008) (citing *Gilbert v. David*, 235 U.S. 561, 569 (1915)). To be domiciled in a state, a person must reside there and intend to remain indefinitely. *Krasnov v. Dinan*, 465 F.2d 1298, 1300–01 (3d Cir. 1972). A person may have only one domicile, and thus may be a citizen of only one state for diversity jurisdiction purposes. See *Williamson v. Osenton*, 232 U.S. 619 (1914).

To the extent the Complaint alleges that Plaintiff is a residents of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this is not sufficient. Residence is not the same as domicile and does not establish citizenship for diversity purposes. See *Krasnov*, 465 F.2d at 1300 (3d Cir. 1972) (“Where one lives is *prima facie* evidence of domicile, but mere residency in a state is insufficient for purposes of diversity.”) (internal citations omitted). To properly allege diversity, Plaintiff must allege its state of citizenship, not merely of residence. As the Notice

of Removal does not contain this fact, the Court cannot determine whether subject matter jurisdiction exists.

III. Conclusion

As Plaintiff has not shown that complete diversity of citizenship exists between the parties, the Court cannot determine that subject matter jurisdiction exists and the matter is subject to dismissal pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3). However, Plaintiff will be given an opportunity to amend and show that diversity of citizenship jurisdiction exists. Plaintiff will be given twenty-one (21) days in which to file a newly-amended complaint. Failure to do so will result in this action being dismissed. An appropriate order follows.

December 18, 2013
Date

/s/ A. Richard Caputo
A. Richard Caputo
United States District Judge